

# Resources for Genealogical Research at the State Library of Massachusetts

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## Genealogical resources unique to the State Library

### The Legislators' Biographical File [Main Library, Room 341]

This card file contains basic biographical information such as years of service, political party (when available), education, occupation, birth and death dates, and other relevant information for all members of the General Court and Constitutional offices from 1780 to the present.

### The Zimmer Index [Main Library, Room 341; and online: search "Zimmer index" in the State Library's main search box]

This is a subject index to Boston-area newspaper articles ca. 1878-1937. It was produced by staff librarians during that era and covers articles from the *Boston Globe*, *Boston Herald*, *Boston Evening Transcript*, *Springfield Republican*, *Worcester Telegram*, *New York Times*, *New York Post*, and a few others. We have most of the newspapers that contain these articles.

The index is available on-line: type "Zimmer index" in the main search box on the State Library's home page.

### Massachusetts City and Town Annual Reports [Main Library, Room 341]

Cities and towns in Massachusetts are required by statute to submit their annual reports to the State Library. Older reports frequently contain information about births, deaths, and marriages. The main library in Room 341 holds the bulk of the collection; older reports--frequently in manuscript format--are in Special Collections; the oldest report is from Salem, 1804. There is a full list available on the State Library's homepage: type "town and city reports" in the main search box.

## **Manuscripts**

### Records of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Massachusetts legislators [Special Collections, Room 55]

The State Library collects the records of Massachusetts legislators. If you have a relation or ancestor who served in the Massachusetts House or Senate it may be that the State Library has his or her records. Examples of collections include the papers of Calvin Coolidge, who began his political career in the Mass. Legislature; Daniel W. Carney, John F. Parker, Carol C. Amick, Lois Pines, Shannon P. O'Brien, Andrew Natsios, Robert H. McClain, Jack Backman, and Barbara Gray. The majority of these collections date from the latter half of the twentieth century. There is very little personal material in these records; collections primarily contain material relating to legislation, issues of concern to the legislator, and constituents.

Related to the records of legislators is a collection titled Manuscript 138. The collection comprises questionnaires that were sent to members of the General Court by the "Boston Journal," a local newspaper. The collection of 23 volumes spans the years 1868-1892 and complements the Legislators' Biographical File.

### Personal and family papers [Special Collections, Room 55]

In addition to the papers of legislators, the Special Collections Department holds the papers of a number of Massachusetts families, including the Craft family (Manuscript 20), Duffie family (Manuscript 198), Stearns family (Ms. Coll. 4), and Emerson and Nichols families (Ms. Coll. 12). There are also many smaller collections, with just a few items, created by individuals, such as the military records and correspondence of Hugh Maxwell, who served in the Massachusetts Militia during the American Revolution (Manuscript 27), and the Civil War journals of Diary of John McCleary, member of Company H, 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts regiment in the civil war, 1862-1864, vol 1-2. [1862-64] (Manuscript 67).

### Tax valuation Lists, 1780-1860 [Special Collections, Room 55]

Special Collections holds 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> c. tax and valuation lists for Massachusetts towns. Tax lists show the amounts levied on individual taxpayers in a given town for a given year for a given purpose. Valuation lists are more detailed than tax lists, itemizing the taxable property of each taxpayer (this could include livestock such as swine and oxen, tillable land, salt meadows, barns, and mills). Tax and valuation lists, particularly early lists, serve as a kind of “city or town directory,” providing a listing of property-owning inhabitants for each town. Valuation lists are particularly useful because they provide a very detailed picture of the property holdings and personal wealth of an individual. Aggregates, or summaries, of valuation data is part of this collection. Lists for Maine are also part of the collection. See “A Guide to Tax Valuations in the Collection of the State Library of Massachusetts,” available in hard copy in Special Collections and electronically through the Library’s [DSpace](http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/) repository: <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/>.

Because of the size and fragile condition of the valuations, we request that researchers consult them on microfilm, available in Special Collections. The reels of microfilm are available through interlibrary loan from familysearch.org. The *New England Historic Genealogical Society*, on Newbury Street, also holds the reels for on-site use but does not lend them through Inter Library Loan.

## Photographs

Massachusetts state legislators [Special Collections, Room 55; and in State Library’s digital repository, DSpace]

One of the most valuable collections in the library is a group of 3,200 images of Massachusetts legislators. The collection spans the years from 1855 to 1908.

World War I soldiers [Special Collections, Room 55; and in State Library’s digital repository, DSpace]

The State Library holds images of more than 20,000 New England men who served in World War I. The collection came to the State Library in 1935, via the *Boston Globe*, and is now available through our digital repository, DSpace.

## Maps and Atlases

[Special Collections, Room 55; and in State Library’s digital repository, DSpace]

Insurance maps and atlases

**“Originals:”** the State Library has over 200 real estate atlases (and a larger number of bound atlas volumes that don’t necessarily contain real estate information). They are all

cataloged in our online public catalog, which you can find by clicking on the Library Catalog button on our home page: <http://www.mass.gov/lib>. The easiest way to find them is to do a keyword search in our online catalog for the city or country you're interested in and the word "atlas." This keyword search method also works for maps.

**Microfilms:** We have a full set of microfilmed real estate atlases from the Library of Congress's collection. A list is available through our website: <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/research-state-and-local-history/sanborn-maps.html>. Or, go to our home page and type the word "atlases" in the top search box, or, go to our home page and click the link Research State & Local History and then click the link Maps, Atlases, and Plans.

A printed inventory of these microfilmed atlases is available in a binder in the Special Collections Reading Room.

**Digitized versions of State Library holdings:** There is a full description of our recent real estate atlas digitization project here: <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/oversight-agencies/lib/massachusetts-real-estate-atlases.html>. The easiest way to find this link is to go to our home page and type the word "atlases" in the top search box.

Our digitized atlases are available through our digital repository DSpace, and also on our Flickr set; links to both are on our home page.

#### Bird's-eye views

The State Library has approximately 200 19th- and 20th-century bird's eye view maps, which are typically aerial maps of cities and towns that were drawn as if from the perspective of a bird in flight.

#### Town maps and plans

The easiest way to find them is to do a keyword search in our online catalog for the city or country you're interested in and the word "map." This keyword search method also works for atlases.

#### County and city atlases

The easiest way to find them is to do a keyword search in our online catalog for the city or country you're interested in and the word "map." This keyword search method also works for atlases.

### **City directories**

[Special Collections, Room 55]

Geographical coverage: holdings include city directories from most cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and a few from New Hampshire. The earliest Boston directory is from 1789; latest Boston directory (a telephone book) is from 1981. Coverage of other towns varies.

Chronological coverage: the earliest Boston directory is from 1789; latest Boston directory is from 1981. Coverage of other towns varies.

Most directories for larger cities and towns can be found in the Reading Room. Those dated prior to 1850 are in secure storage within the building and must be retrieved by a department staff member. Directories from the smaller cities and towns are in the Special Collections stacks and also must be retrieved by a department staff member. An index in the Reading Room will give shelving locations for all directories.

A full list of holdings is available through the Library's website: <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/research-state-and-local-history/city-directories-and-voting-lists.html>, or, type "city directories" in the search box on the State Library's home page. A printed list is available in a binder in the Special Collections Reading Room.

Other formats: besides the basic format of directories (alphabetical list of residents, by last name; usually some advertising), the State Library also has other formats, such as householder directories, business directories, building directories, and a few for specific nationalities or ethnic groups, such as Italian, Chinese, and French.

## **Newspapers**

[Historical newspapers: Special Collections, Room 55; and in State Library's digital repository, DSpace. Current newspapers, and microfilm of major Boston newspapers: Main Library, Room 341]

The State Library has a large selection of historical newspapers covering the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This collection primarily focuses on statewide newspapers. The collection is located on the fourth floor balcony of the State Library (current newspapers, and microfilm of major newspapers such as the Boston Globe), and in the Special Collections department (hard copies of historical newspapers; some microfilm).

A list of historical newspapers is available on the State Library's homepage: type "historical newspapers" in the main search box.

## **Vital Records Series (to 1850)**

Compiled and published in the early 20th century for many municipalities in Massachusetts, these volumes include birth, marriage, and death information transcribed from town and church records, cemeteries, and private sources. Some town records exist only on microfiche.

Resources for Genealogical Research at the State Library of Massachusetts

<http://www.mass.gov/lib>

To see a full list of State Library holdings, search for “vital records to 1850” in the main search box.

## **Probate Records**

The Library’s collection includes some early probate records for Barnstable, Bristol, Essex, Middlesex, and Plymouth counties, as well as some index volumes for Middlesex (1648-1870), Suffolk (1636-1922), and Worcester (1731-1904) counties. Search the Library's [online public catalog](#) for specific holdings.

## **Published Family Histories**

The Library has a historical collection of published family histories. For specific holdings please refer to the [online public catalog](#).

## **Institutional and Historical Society Publications**

The Library’s collection includes some histories of academic institutions such as Harvard College and Boston University, as well as publications of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Bostonian Society, and some of the local historical societies. The *NEHGS Register*, the quarterly journal of the [New England Historic Genealogical Society](#) (1847-date) and *New England Ancestors*, the Society's magazine, are in the State Library's collection. For specific holdings please refer to the [online public catalog](#).

## **Census records**

[Main Library, Room 341]

### **Census, Federal**

The State Library of Massachusetts has participated in the [Federal Depository Library Program](#) for over 100 years. This program, established by U.S. Congress and administered through the Government Printing Office, provides the public with free access to government publications. Federal census information includes non-population schedules, separate schedules for industry and agriculture, and for aggregate data. The library does not hold population schedules, which list individual names. (For these, see the National Archives in Waltham or the Massachusetts State Archives.) This material has a Federal document call number.

Federal census material from 1850 to the present day can be found in the main library.

For specific information on Massachusetts in 2000, see "The Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics 2000: 2000 Census of Population and Housing; Massachusetts. [Main library: HA201 2000 .P76]. This title is also available through the Census Bureau's website ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

### **Census, Massachusetts, 1845-1915**

Starting in 1845, Mass. censuses were compiled each decade. The library holds schedules for industry and agriculture as well as aggregate data. (The Mass. State Archives has population schedules for 1855 and 1865.) Copies of these volumes are also in the Mass. Room of the Main Library. Massachusetts census material after 1915 is located in the Mass. Room. Aggregate information from an 1820 Massachusetts census is located in Special Collections.

In general we do not have the decennial enumeration of persons who were residing in Massachusetts. However we do have two (2) published volumes for 1790 and 1800, the earliest known censuses for this country. These two volumes provide only the names of heads of households and, in the case of the 1790 census, the numbers of persons in age, gender, and free/slave categories.

- 1790: a published transcription of the census, arranged by county and town, with an alphabetical name index in the back.

- [record in OPAC: Heads of families at the first census of the United States taken in the year 1790 : Massachusetts. United States. Census Office; call number F69.U52 1966; Stacks]

- 1800: a name index only of heads of households, with county and page number in the 1800 census (not available here).

- [Record in OPAC: Index to the 1800 census of Massachusetts / compiled by Elizabeth Petty Bentley; call number F63.B46; Stacks ]

Note to researchers: for those looking for population lists, the library's collection of tax valuation lists may be helpful. See Valuation Lists.

### **Census 2000 maps**

Census 2000 maps: P.L. 94-171 County Block Maps, P.L. 94-171 Voting District/State Legislative District Outline Maps and Census Tract Outline Maps. A CD product with the data accompanies these maps.

## **Access to genealogical resources; how to find out what the State Library has**

- OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog): click Library Catalog button on the State Library's homepage.
- Website ([www.mass.gov/lib](http://www.mass.gov/lib)) See, specifically, this page:  
<http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/research-state-and-local-history/genealogical-resources.html> .
- Digital collections (click "DSpace Digital Repository" on the State Library's homepage).
- Brochures (available both in the Main Library and in the Special Collections Department).
- Staff. We are here to help you find what you need.

## **Where to find genealogical resources in the State Library (what is where):**

The State Library has three locations in the Massachusetts State House,  
24 Beacon Street, Boston:

### **Room 341 (Main Reading Room):**

- Massachusetts legislative materials
- State publications
- City and town annual reports
- Massachusetts municipal reports
- Federal documents
- General reference resources
- Online research databases
- Massachusetts history publications
- Genealogical publications

### **Room 442 (Periodicals Balcony)**

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- House and Senate sessions (broadcast live)

### **Room 55 (Special Collections Department)**

- Rare and historic publications and artifacts
- Manuscript collections
- State and municipal maps and atlases
- Real estate atlases
- City and town directories
- Photograph collections
- House and Senate recordings
- Scrapbooks
- Architectural plans, especially for the State House

Resources for Genealogical Research at the State Library of Massachusetts

<http://www.mass.gov/lib>



## **State Library of Massachusetts**

Home page: <http://www.mass.gov/lib>

DSpace Digital repository: <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/>

State Library Flickr page:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mastatelibrary/collections/>

### **Contact us:**

State Library of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02133

Main Library:  
State House, Room 341  
617-727-2590  
[reference.department@state.ma.us](mailto:reference.department@state.ma.us)

Special Collections  
State House, Room 55  
617-727-2595  
[special.collections@state.ma.us](mailto:special.collections@state.ma.us)

9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday  
(Closed all Massachusetts Legal Holidays)



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<http://www.mass.gov/lib>